

Wendy Lovell

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MEDIA RELEASE

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MADDEN IGNORES FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The Project Impact Assessment (PIA) report for the north-south pipeline contradicts Federal Government concerns that last week caused it to deem the project a “controlled action”, said Member for Northern Victoria Region Wendy Lovell.

Ms Lovell said the report, which was prepared by Melbourne Water, GHD, Sinclair Knight Merz and John Holland after Planning Minister Justin Madden refused a full Environmental Effects Statement (EES), was a poor substitute for an EES and called for a full investigation into the environmental impacts of the north-south pipeline.

“How detailed can this report be given the Sugarloaf Pipeline Alliance had just six weeks to complete it?” Ms Lovell said.

“The report attempts to play-down environmental concerns about the pipeline, by stating that the project will not significantly impact environmental, social or economic values associated with the project.

“This is not the view of the Federal Government, which last week declared the project a controlled action because of its potential impacts on listed threatened species and communities.

“Not only should the full impacts of the pipeline be investigated, but also the impact of removing 75 gigalitres of water each year from the already stressed Goulburn Murray Irrigation District.

“What the report does highlight, however, is the extent of community opposition to the pipeline and the discontent felt by many landowners in the Yea region.

“The report makes the coy claim that ‘significant effort has been made to engage with Plug the Pipe ... many meetings have occurred sitting around people’s kitchen tables.’

“This is not what I’ve been told by members of Plug the Pipe who have been forced to resort to protest action in order to put their view to the arrogant Brumby Government.”

Ms Lovell said it was impossible to gauge the full extent of environmental harm that could be caused by the pipeline until the exact route had been determined.

“Currently the route of the pipeline is still up in the air. But the Brumby Government is prepared to trample over precious woodlands such as the Toolangi State Forest and put at risk 75 threatened fauna species - including the striped legless lizard - in order to appease Melbourne’s water users before the 2010 election,” Ms Lovell said.

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Ms Lovell encouraged members of the community who are opposed to the north-south pipeline to make submissions in response to the PIA report.

Submissions close on Friday, 18 March 2008 and can be posted to: Sugarloaf Interconnector Advisory Committee, Planning Panels Victoria, GPO Box 2392, Melbourne VIC 3001

To access a copy of the report and information about making submissions, visit www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/ees, or phone 1800 453 753.